

## Popular Sovereignty

The idea of popular sovereignty is certainly not a new one since democratic ideals have been alive since the first city states were formed in ancient Greece. However, the full development of these ideas can be credited to the development of a social contract between the people and the government which rules them which owes a lot to the work for philosophers and thinkers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke amongst others (Wikipedia, 2006). Locke is particularly important because he not only explained the social contract and the idea of popular sovereignty; he also discussed what the public must do if the government fails to keep its end of the bargain.

Locke suggests that a ruler or a government must establish its own legitimacy before it seeks the consent of the governed to take away certain rights. Locke gives a positive view of government since he does not suggest that governments have to be created by force but rather that legitimate governmental authorities can only be established when the people of a state agree to be governed by a particular person (Uzgalis, 2001). Such ideas are very clearly reflected in the declaration of independence when it is shown how the king has failed to act responsibly towards his subjects.

This is the essence and root of the democratic ideal that popular sovereignty and government has to be for the people, of the people and by the people. According to Locke, wherever such governments exist, the rule of law prevails and justice can be distributed to everyone. Of course even a kingship or a monarchy can perform these functions therefore it is possible for the subjects to be ruled by a single person rather than a democratically elected governmental body. However, even a king must accept the rule of law and behave in a manner acceptable to the people of he can be removed from power by force (Uzgalis, 2001).

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